

CHAPTER

XXV. 1812.

Changeableness of Bonaparte's plans and opinions — Articles for the *Moniteur* dictated by the First Consul — The Protocol of the Congress of Chatillon— Conversations with Davoust at Hamburg —Promise of the Vice royalty of Poland — Hope and disappointment of the Poles — Influence of illusion on Bonaparte — The French in Moscow — Disasters of the retreat — Mallet's conspiracy—Intelligence of the affair communicated to Napoleon at Sinolensko—Circumstances detailed by Rapp — Real motives of Napoleon's return to Paris—Murat, Ney, and Eugene — Power of the Italians to endure cold — Napoleon's exertions to repair his losses
— Defection of General York — Convocation of a Privy Council — War resolved on —Wavering of the Pope —Useless negotiations with Vienna
— Maria Louisa appointed Regent.

IT may now be asked whether Bonaparte, previous to entering upon the last campaign, had resolved on restoring Poland to independence. The fact is that Bonaparte, as Emperor, never entertained any positive wish to re-establish, the old Kingdom of Poland, though at a previous period he was strongly inclined to that re-establishment, of which he felt the necessity. He may have said that he would re-establish the Kingdom of Poland, but I beg leave to say that that is no reason for believing that he entertained any such design. He had said, and even sworn, that he would never aggrandize the territory of the Empire! The changeableness of Bonaparte's ideas, plans, and projects renders it difficult to master them; but they may be best understood when it is considered that all Napoleon's plans and conceptions varied with his fortunes. Thus, it is not unlikely that he might at one time have considered the re-establishment of Poland as essential to European policy, and afterwards have regarded it as adverse to the development of his ambition. Who can venture to guess what passed in his mind when dazzled by his glory at Dresden, and whether in one of his dreams he might not have regarded the Empire of the Jagellons as another